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RUEHWL/AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON 1070
RHHMUNA/HQ USPACOM HONOLULU HI
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E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: AORC OVIP PIF XV

SUBJECT: PACIFIC FORUM POST-FORUM DIALOGUE - PROPOSAL FOR
USG 2006 PARTICIPATION

REF: SUVA 350

Post-Forum Dialogue schedule change

¶1. (U) When EAP/ANP Director Steven McGann visited the Pacific Island Forum (PIF) Secretariat on Sept. 6, PIF Secretary General Greg Urwin elaborated on current plans for

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the annual Forum meetings, now to be held in Nadi, Fiji. The schedule has been condensed, with the Forum meetings themselves running from Monday, Oct. 23, to Wednesday, Oct 25, followed by the Post-Forum Dialogues (PFD) beginning with a plenary session in late morning Thursday, Oct. 26, and individual partner dialogues continuing through Friday, Oct. 27. The U.S. PFD session is currently scheduled for 2:30 p.m. on Thursday, Oct. 26.

New option for A/S Hill's participation

¶2. (U) Urwin offered a new option for U.S. Forum participation this year. The PIF is excited about EAP A/S Hill's intention to attend. Urwin has heard interest from several Pacific leaders in having a special, up to two-hour session with A/S Hill at 2 p.m. Wednesday, Oct. 15. At least some of the Forum heads of government would participate, though others would likely already be on the road. (Regular PFD sessions are at the ministerial level.) This special Wednesday meeting could substitute for the usual PFD session with the U.S. on Thursday p.m., if the U.S. so wishes.

Query re U.S. setting up regular dialogue with Pacific

¶3. (U) The PIF is open to U.S. suggestions for the agenda of a special meeting, though Urwin noted one topic would undoubtedly be the Forum leader's interest in establishing a routine, periodic dialogue with the U.S. beyond the PIF setting, something akin to mechanisms Japan, China, and France have set up, and the EU is contemplating. The Forum sees the U.S. as the only "core" partner without such a mechanism. Urwin said Forum leaders would be open to discussing the appropriate level for such meetings, whatever is most useful. Such meetings might be at the "officials" level. (The mechanisms with Japan, China, and France are at "head of government" level, and routinely take place every two-three years.)

Other agendas: regional security, JCC

¶4. (U) McGann signaled tentative USG acceptance of the offer

of a special USG session with PIF leaders for this year, pending further clarification of A/S Hill's schedule. McGann added that a useful topic for the session could be mutual U.S.-Pacific interests in regional security and how best to ensure operational effectiveness for security enhancements. PIF reorganization and regional donor coordination, McGann noted, would also be priority issues. Urwin noted that the future of the Joint Commercial Commission (JCC) would also surely be of interest.

Comment and action request

¶4. (SBU) This offer of a special two-hour session for A/S Hill with some of the Pacific heads of government strikes us as a really good idea, if A/S Hill's schedule permits. The offer is a compliment. It is also an opportunity for A/S Hill and regional leaders to have a meaty discussion of mutual interests. The desire of Pacific leaders to have the U.S. initiate a new, regular dialogue with the region, outside the PIF formula, may be a way of testing how intense U.S. interest in accenting Pacific engagement really is. If it could be negotiated to routinely take place at an appropriate "senior officials" level, with occasional sessions at still higher levels, it would, indeed, be a fine signal of U.S. engagement and an opportunity to canvass the range of mutual interests in a setting more amenable than the PFD sessions to date. Given the proposal (ref) to turn the regular PFD into a plenary of all partners, with no separate U.S. session, a routine mechanism for our specific issues with the region could prove useful.

¶5. (U) Please provide a response ASAP on A/S Hill's availability to participate in the offer of a Wednesday, Oct. 25, PIF session. Thanks.

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